



Kendal Coker, '16
Art Director, GSD&M

As an advertising student in Gaylord College, Kendal Coker was active with Lindsey + Asp. The 2016 graduate's time there introduced her to how an agency operated, and helped set her up for career success. Now, Coker works at GSD&M in Austin, where she is an art director for both Jack Link's Meat Snacks and Food Lion. Coker recently shared how her time at OU prepared her for an agency career, what she does in her current role and more.

What is your favorite memory from your time at Gaylord College?

There are so many great memories. Top Jobs shenanigans. Capstone all-nighters. But my favorite moments always happened during Lindsey + Asp's Creative Internship classes. Trevor Morse started the program in 2014, and we taught it together until he graduated and I took it over with some other great L + A creatives. We were just students ourselves, trying to teach other students how to work Adobe

fun) days I'm shooting remotely with Jack Link's Sasquatch, critiquing his [drone-smashing technique](#). I love the work (most days, as with any job), and I love my team and GSD&M people. After the madness of 2020, I feel especially lucky to work for a company that prioritizes people and tough conversations, whether that be about race, immigration detention or anything else. Here's a link to a project a GSD&M team recently released: <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/12/985726774/a-picture-book-about-children-at-the-border-aims-to-spark-family-conversations>

What do you consider to be the most significant moments of your career so far?

A couple years ago my writer and I shot a [spot for Walgreens' Feel More Like You program](#): an initiative to help women going through cancer treatments feel like themselves even with the physical differences the

Creative Suite, write scripts, critique work and come up with ideas. We were all figuring it out together, and we had a lot of fun while we were at it. It's also the thing I am most proud of from my time at Gaylord. I still follow other creatives from the program on social media, and so many of them are doing amazing things now. I love that I got to be there when they were just learning the basics for the first time.

Do you have a favorite faculty/staff member at Gaylord?

Gaylord is crawling with incredibly talented faculty and staff, but we don't deserve David Tarpenning or Debbie Yount. Those two have had more of a heavy hand shaping professionals from Gaylord than anyone else I know. Tarp always had his door open and candy bowl full, ready to hear our worries and concerns and offer advice. He's the one who initially told me about two internship programs that I would go on to participate in, and that would play a huge part in me getting my first job and shaping how I see the world. And Debbie was never hesitant to call out potential in students and encourage them to step up in Lindsey + Asp. She pushed me to step into creative director and advertising director while there, two roles I likely would've shied away from were it not for her guidance.

How did your career path lead you to your current job?

At Top Jobs my senior year I connected with the talent coordinator at Grey NY, and that relationship led to my first role as an art director there. I worked in a breath of categories: toys, retail, beauty, nonprofit, food, etc. After three years I decided to move closer to family and landed at GSD&M in Austin.

Describe your company and your current role there.

GSD&M is an Austin culture staple. We're right on 6th Street, and the company has a rich history of shaping the city. And besides the obvious eyesore that is UT's campus, Austin is a fantastic city, especially for advertising. I am an art director there working on Jack Link's Meat Snacks and Food Lion, a grocery chain on the east coast. These days I'm working remotely, and every day is different. Some days I'm putting together tactical look and feels for in-store campaigns, and other (more

measurements bring forth. We sold in the idea of "Battle Beautifully," an attitude-heavy rally cry. And then we sold in a spot that used all real cancer patients, a female director, a rap track by a female artist, all led and supported by my female creative director for our all-female client team. It was an awesome moment for all these women to come together for such an important cause. AND for the work to actually be killer.

How did Gaylord College prepare you for your future career?

Lindsey + Asp helped me understand how an agency operated, and what my role was. And the New York agency trip put me into the buildings and around the people who taught me even more. I felt truly lucky to have had so much experience coming into my first job. I got feedback from many bosses and team members that they were surprised at how well adapted I was as a recent grad who didn't go to portfolio school.

What advice would you give to current students aspiring to a career in mass communication?

When you feel that hesitation to jump into an opportunity at Gaylord, that probably means you need to do it. Those four years are the only time in your life when you have so many resources at your fingertips: professors, alumni, Lindsey + Asp, etc. Take advantage while you can. Get involved. Annoy your professors. Eat all their candy bowl candy and ask all the questions.

What do you do for fun outside of work?

I just got married and bought a house and a flock of chickens and ducks, so between DIY projects and tending to them I stay pretty busy outside of work. I also love to craft clay earrings and drink margaritas on patios with good people.

Are there any other organizations or projects you're involved with outside of your full-time job that you want to highlight?

I'm a [CASA \(Court Appointed Special Advocate\)](#) for kids in the foster care system in Travis County. It's a fantastic organization that's all around the country (including Norman!). We advocate for kids' best interest alongside CPS, attorneys and parents.



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